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REFERENCE GROUP THEORY AND SOCIAL MATURITY, (U)

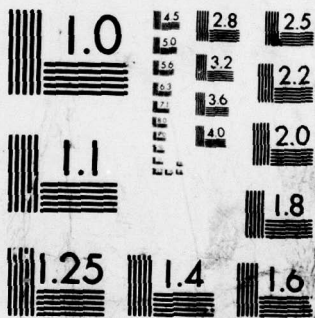
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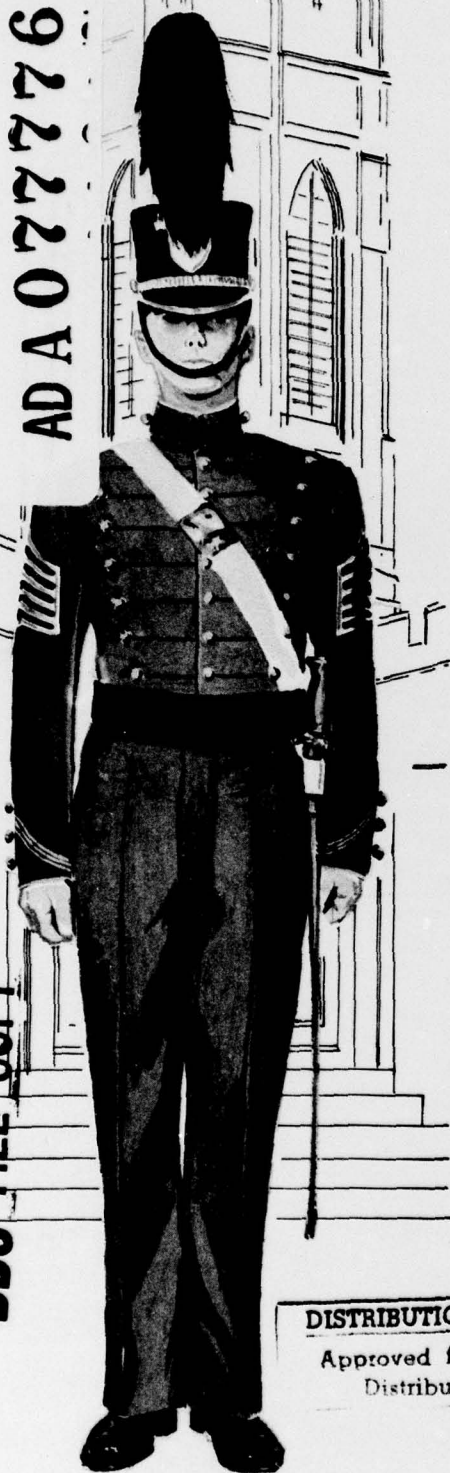
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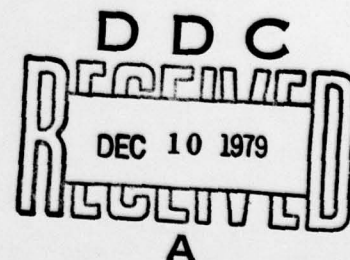
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6 REFERENCE GROUP THEORY AND SOCIAL MATURITY

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ABSTRACT

This study, conducted in July 1972 on the Class of 1976, was initiated to explain the possibility that the number of and type of relationships with reference groups are related to resignation from USMA. The results indicate that: (a) social maturity is related to the number of reference groups reported by cadets--the more reported, the more maturity; (b) social maturity is related to the type of experience had with reference groups--the more perceived threat, the less maturity; (c) the number of reference groups and the type of experience perceived interact with one another but in as yet an undetermined fashion; (d) resignations seem to be more a function of the number of reference groups than the indices of social maturity, this observation based on the fact that resignees within categories of cadets established on the basis of the number of and type of experience with reference groups do not have lower California ~~Personality~~ *Psychological* Inventory subscores than the active cadets.

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INTRODUCTION

In a first attempt to obtain information on the number, size, and types of reference groups of cadets and the relationships that exist between constructs derived from reference group theory and performance at West Point, only one of 45 constructs gave indication of some underlying relationship with performance (Marron, 1972). The one promising construct was in response to the question where the examinee was asked to indicate the number of reference groups which he believed he had been threatened with elimination at one time or another. The data suggested that the more reference groups an individual perceived as posing a threat of elimination, the less likely would he remain at West Point. In order to determine whether the suggestion was in fact an indication of reality, two questions were asked of the entire Class of 1976 in July, 1972.

The questions were preceded by the following brief statement:

"A reference group is defined as one or more persons with whom you associate. Most people have more than one reference group; that is, groups of persons with whom you associate but who do not generally associate with one another. Examples of reference groups are: a girl friend, your family, classmates, groups of close friends (gangs), religious groups, and so on."

Having considered the concept of reference groups, approximately how many such groups would you say you have?

- a. 1
- b. 2-3
- c. 4-6
- d. 7-9
- e. 10 or more

By how many of your reference groups have you ever been threatened with exclusion; i.e., if you did not act as the group expected you, you would be ignored by the group members?

- a. None
- b. 1
- c. 2-3
- d. 4-6
- e. 7 or more

A two way distribution of responses to the two questions plus the number and percent of those who had resigned are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF CADETS (CLASS OF 76) BY RESPONSES TO A (NUMBER OF REFERENCE GROUPS)
AND B (NUMBER WITH WHICH THREAT WAS EXPERIENCED)

A. Number of Reference Groups															
B. No. of Groups with Threat	1		2-3		4-6		7-9		10+		Total				
	Ent. N	Res.* N (%)	Ent. N	Res. N (%)	Ent. N	Res. N (%)	Ent. N	Res. N (%)	Ent. N	Res. N (%)	Ent. N	Res. N (%)			
	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—			
None	5	2(40)	90	17(19)	462	11(15)	262	32(12)	185	27(14)	1004	149(15)			
1	0	0 (0)	20	7(35)	107	24(22)	54	10(18)	25	5(20)	206	46(22)			
2 - 3	0	0 (0)	1	0 (0)	41	8(20)	23	6(13)	43	8(19)	108	19(18)			
4 - 6	0	0 (0)	0	0 (0)	4	1(25)	7	0 (0)	6	1(17)	17	2(12)			
7+	0	0 (0)	0	0 (0)	0	0 (0)	1	1(100)	0	0 (0)	1	1(100)			
Totals	5	2(40)	111	24(22)	614	104(17)	347	46(13)	259	41(16)	1336	217(16)			

*Resignees are as of 31 December 1972.

An inspection of Table 1 suggested that there were two factors related to resignations: (a) a small number of reference groups and (b) the experience of threat from a group. Accordingly, the sample was divided into three groups as follows:

<u>Group</u>	Size	Resigned	
	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
A. Less than 4 reference groups	116	26	22.4%
B. Four or more reference groups with at least one threat	311	61	19.6%
C. Four or more reference groups with no threat	909	130	14.3%

From the structure of the three groups and the corresponding resignation rates three hypotheses were generated:

- I. That those who report three or less reference groups have led relatively sheltered lives and that when faced with the threat of cadet life, preferred to return to the security of the "home fire."
- II. That those who report four or more reference groups and no threats of isolation have developed both the ability to adjust to a greater variety of situations and a corresponding confidence in their ability to adjust.
- III. That those who report four or more reference groups and who also report at least one instance of threat of isolation from a group are somewhat less confident in their ability to adjust to new groups and hence are more apt to avoid a group which is perceived as posing some threat than are those reporting four or more reference groups without threat of elimination.

This study is essentially a test of the three hypotheses using selected subscores of the California ~~Personality~~ Inventory (CPI): Social Presence (SP), Sociability (SY), Socialization (SO), and Self-acceptance (SA).

The description of the four subscores from the CPI Manual are as follows:

1. SP (Social Presence): To assess factors such as poise, spontaneity, and self-confidence in personal and social interaction.
2. SY (Sociability): To identify persons of outgoing, sociable, participative temperament.
3. SO (Socialization): To indicate the degree of social maturity, integrity, and rectitude which the individual has attained.
4. SA (Self-Acceptance): To assess factors such as sense of personal worth, self-acceptance, and capacity for independent thinking and action.

Hypothesis I would be supported if Group A has lower SY, SP, SA, and possibly SO scores than either Group B or C.

Hypothesis II would be supported if Group C has higher scores than either Group A or B on at least three of the four subscores being used.

Hypothesis III would be supported if hypotheses I and II are both supported.

Regarding those cadets in Group A, it was believed that sons of military personnel who are in the group would not be so inclined to leave as others, primarily on the assumption that the Corps of Cadets is more likely to be perceived by them as a logical extension of an already existing reference group than would be the case for cadets in Group A who do not have an extended military socioeconomic background.

PROCEDURE

Raw scores on the four CPI subtests were obtained and F-tests for each subtest followed by t-tests where the F-tests were significant. With respect to those cadets with a military socioeconomic background, the cadets whose fathers have or had a military career were separated from all others by group and the resignation rates compared.

RESULTS

Results of the F & t tests are summarized in Table 2.

TABLE 2

SUMMARY STATISTICS OF F & t-TESTS BY GROUPS FOR
EACH OF THE CPI SUBTESTS (CL OF 1976)

1. Sociability (SY)				F = 16.0885 (.001)	
	<u>N</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Groups</u>	<u>t-Value</u>
Group A	73	23.15	4.65	A & B	4.281 (.001)
Group B	192	25.89	4.69	A & C	5.608 (.001)
Group C	556	26.40	4.71	B & C	.999 (NS)
2. Social Presence (SP)				F = 9.1061 (.001)	
	<u>N</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Groups</u>	<u>t-Value</u>
Group A	73	33.90	5.40	A & B	2.343 (.01)
Group B	142	35.70	5.66	A & C	3.982 (.001)
Group C	556	36.58	5.44	B & C	1.877 (.05)
3. Self-acceptance (SA)				F = 9.7338 (.001)	
	<u>N</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Groups</u>	<u>t-Value</u>
Group A	73	21.07	3.14	A & B	4.719 (.001)
Group B	142	23.18	3.52	A & C	4.325 (.001)
Group C	556	22.79	3.55	B & C	1.311 (NS)
4. Socialization (SO)				F = 6.5164 (.001)	
	<u>N</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Groups</u>	<u>t-Value</u>
Group A	73	37.19	5.23	A & B	(NS)
Group B	192	36.82	5.58	A & C	1.779 (.05)
Group C	556	38.35	5.35	B & C	3.311 (.01)

From Table 2, it is clear that Group A has significantly lower Sociability, Social Presence, and Self-acceptance scores than Group B or C. These results support hypothesis I. On the other hand, Groups B and C are not so different from one another--no significant difference being found on Sociability or Self-acceptance, and only a marginal difference on Social Presence. Only on Socialization does Group C become significantly differentiated from Groups A and B.

Resignation rates for those with military socioeconomic background versus all other by groups are summarized in Table 3.

TABLE 3
RESIGNATION RATES AS OF 31 DEC 1972 FOR THOSE
WITH A MILITARY SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUND
VERSUS ALL OTHER BY GROUPS

Group	MILITARY		NON-MILITARY	
	<u>Entered</u>	<u>Resigned</u>	<u>Entered</u>	<u>Resigned</u>
	N	N %	N	N %
A	16	4 (25%)	54	14 (26%)
B	25	4 (16%)	159	31 (19%)
C	77	9 (10%)	464	76 (16%)

The evidence (Table 3) does not support the observation that cadets with a military socioeconomic background in Group A would have a smaller resignation rate.

Summary statistics on the CPI subtests for military and non-military socioeconomic backgrounds are presented in Appendix A. It is of some interest that the average scores of cadets with military socioeconomic background who resigned are considerably lower than their counterpart in both Groups A and B. It is also of some interest that the percent of cadets with military background in Group A is significantly larger (22%) than the proportion in either Groups B or C.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

It is apparent from the results that Groups B and C are not so different from one another as was originally hypothesized, and the inference to be drawn is that the number of reference groups is a more critical variable than the number from which he has experienced threat. Nevertheless, threat seems to be an important variable in that Social Presence and Socialization both differentiate Group B from Group C. In the latter case, Socialization, Groups A and B are not different from one another.

One can tentatively conclude that those in Group A have generally less poise, self-acceptance, self-assurance, and interpersonal adequacy than those in Groups B or C, but that Group C has a higher degree of social maturity and a higher sense of integrity and rectitude than those in either Groups A or B.

Although the resignation rates for the three groups (Table 1) were the basis for the development of the hypotheses that were tested, contrary to what might be expected, the resignees do not generally have lower subscores than the active cadets within groups (see Appendix A). Only the resignees with a military socioeconomic background in Groups A & B, are lower than their active counterparts. However, there are only four cadets involved in each group. The implication of the results is that resignation rates may well be more significantly a function of the number of reference groups and the types of relationships one has with such groups (positive or negative) rather than a function of the types and amounts of personality traits one has, even for those personality traits that seem to be a function of the number of and types of relationships one experiences through reference groups.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this exploratory study indicate that:

- a. Social maturity is related to the number of reference groups reported by cadets; the more reported, the more maturity.
- b. Social maturity is related to the type of experience had with reference groups; the more perceived threat, the less maturity.
- c. The number of reference groups and the type of experience perceived interact with one another, but in as yet an undetermined fashion.
- d. Resignations seem to be more a function of the number of reference groups and type of experience with reference groups than the indices of social maturity, this observation based on the fact that resignees within categories of cadets established on the basis of the number of and type of experience with reference groups do not have lower CPI subscores than the active cadets.

REFERENCES

- Marron, J.E. Reference Groups and Success at USMA: A First Inquiry, Office of Institutional Research, 1972.

APPENDIX

TABLE 1

SUMMARY STATISTICS ON CPI SUBTESTS FOR ACTIVE AND
RESIGNED (AS OF 31 DEC 72) CADETS HAVING
A MILITARY SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUND
AND ALL OTHERS (GROUP A)

MILITARY							
Test	Active N = 12		Resigned N = 4		Total N = 16		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
1. Sociability	23.33	4.81	22.75	5.56	23.19	4.82	
2. Social Presence	34.75	5.24	31.00	5.48	33.81	5.38	
3. Self-acceptance	21.42	3.55	18.25	4.35	20.62	3.88	
4. Socialization	37.75	4.67	35.00	3.56	37.06	4.48	

NON-MILITARY							
Test	Active N = 40		Resigned N = 4		Total N = 16		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
1. Sociability	23.07	4.77	23.71	4.99	23.14	4.69	
2. Social Presence	33.30	5.18	36.29	6.29	33.93	5.51	
3. Self-acceptance	21.32	3.08	21.43	2.41	21.19	2.96	
4. Socialization	37.12	5.44	37.36	5.62	37.23	5.50	

TABLE 2

SUMMARY STATISTICS ON CPI SUBTESTS FOR ACTIVE AND
RESIGNED (AS OF 31 DEC 72) CADETS HAVING
A MILITARY SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUND
AND ALL OTHERS (GROUP B)

MILITARY						
Test	Active N = 21		Resigned N = 4		Total N = 25	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1. Sociability	25.86	4.93	20.00	3.37	24.92	5.15
2. Social Presence	37.71	5.57	29.75	7.68	36.44	6.49
3. Self-acceptance	23.05	3.47	17.25	3.59	22.13	4.04
4. Socialization	38.10	5.80	37.75	5.68	38.04	5.66

NON-MILITARY						
Test	Active N = 128		Resigned N = 31		Total N = 167	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1. Sociability	26.56	4.35	23.58	5.11	26.04	4.63
2. Social Presence	35.72	5.50	34.97	5.57	35.59	5.56
3. Self-acceptance	23.62	3.36	22.16	3.62	23.34	3.44
4. Socialization	36.93	5.26	35.81	6.42	36.63	5.58

TABLE 3

SUMMARY STATISTICS ON CPI SUBTESTS FOR ACTIVE AND
RESIGNED (AS OF 31 DEC 72) CADETS HAVING
A MILITARY SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUND
AND ALL OTHERS (GROUP C)

MILITARY

Test	Active N = 68		Resigned N = 9		Total N = 77	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1. Sociability	26.48	4.65	26.67	2.60	26.46	4.44
2. Social Presence	36.40	5.16	37.33	3.46	36.49	4.95
3. Self-acceptance	22.85	3.27	23.00	2.55	22.85	3.16
4. Socialization	38.44	5.00	34.78	8.06	38.00	5.47

NON-MILITARY

Test	Active N = 388		Resigned N = 76		Total N = 478	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1. Sociability	26.61	4.67	25.03	4.95	26.38	4.76
2. Social Presence	36.73	5.53	35.53	5.58	36.60	5.53
3. Self-acceptance	22.84	3.68	22.42	3.36	22.78	3.61
4. Socialization	38.45	5.26	38.04	5.88	38.41	5.34

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